

Nevada Department of Agriculture News Release



February 15, 2003

Contact: Rick Hartigan
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Exotic Newcastle Disease News Update

Las Vegas, NV – Having no new sites infected with Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) in the past week, officials with the Nevada Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are redirecting their efforts to monitor signs of the deadly bird disease.

“We have eliminated the risks of known infected or contaminated birds and materials spreading the disease to other areas,” said Dr. David Thain, State Veterinarian for the Nevada Department of Agriculture. “Therefore, we now must focus our energy and resources on surveying to ensure that exotic Newcastle disease is no longer present in Nevada before we can declare eradication.”

Surveillance personnel are continuing their efforts to locate poultry and bird populations in areas surrounding the North Las Vegas neighborhood where the avian disease was found, as well as examining any sick or recently dead birds. No such examinations during the last week have yielded positive diagnosis of END.

Areas where poultry have been kept within one kilometer of the infected premises are being thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. When this process is complete, disease-free poultry, known as sentinel birds, will be brought in and placed at previously infected premises.

“If our sentinel birds remain healthy, then we can declare eradication,” said Dr. Thain. “But, until we have eradicated exotic Newcastle disease from Nevada, the quarantine remains in effect.”

Direct contact between birds presents a high risk of spreading END. Therefore, the transportation of birds in Clark County and southern Nye County remains restricted. The quarantine on the movement of birds, poultry and bird and poultry materials that was enacted on January 16, 2003 is still in effect. To date, nine citations have been issued for violations relating to the incident. Ten investigations have been initiated. Any violation of the quarantine order may result in fines up to \$600 and civil penalties up to \$25,000.

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Owners can protect their poultry, flocks of racing pigeons or pet birds by avoiding contact with other birds. Direct contact between birds is a common means of transmission of many diseases, including END. The purpose of the quarantine is to reduce direct contact and prevent potential movement of infected birds into uninfected areas. Any movement of birds risks spread of the disease, additional containment efforts and extended quarantine.

Although it is not a danger to humans, a person's hands, shoes or clothing can carry the virus to birds. People should wash their hands with antibacterial soap for at least 15 seconds after handling any bird. The more time spent scrubbing, the greater the protection. Another precaution is to apply a disinfectant spray to your shoes, particularly the soles. Clothing should be changed and laundered after handling other birds.

People who are in direct contact with poultry should be cautious. While END may infect any bird, the strain of the virus detected in Clark County has been particularly fatal in poultry.

While cleaning cages, owners should disinfect them regularly. Scrubbing cages with a commercial disinfectant that kills viruses, or a water and bleach solution in a ratio of 16:1 will remove the END virus, as well as other pathogens that may harm birds. Food bought in sealed packages may be presumed to be free of the virus while seed bought in bulk may contain the virus. Bulk seed is subject to visits of wild birds that may defecate in it, resulting in the transmission of disease to backyard birds. Storage of seed in a sealed container in a cool, dry location will keep it free from the END virus.

Any questions, please call 702-515-2991 or 1-866-490-2991 toll free.

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